

Matthew: A Concise Commentary

Central Concepts

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The Gospel According to Matthew

Introduction

The word *gospel* means “the good news” or “the reward for bringing the good news of God’s activity in Jesus Christ.” It describes the character of this news about and from God and was applied to the four gospel accounts or narratives (Mark, Matthew, Luke, John) in the 2nd century B.C. None of them are biographies but rather contain selected episodes in the life and ministry of Jesus for the purpose of alerting, awakening, and advocating strong faith in Jesus as God’s ultimate portrayal of Himself in human form.

Furthermore, these four gospel accounts are not set forth in strictly objective historical sequence or perspectives. Rather, they record their selected episodes in history with a theological twist; that is, with an interpretation which highlights or stresses God’s salvation purposes in and through these selected events.

Unlike the Gospel according to Mark, which has no formal introduction, Matthew has a geneological introduction. That is, this account begins with Abraham and proceeds to Jesus. Luke, on the other hand, begins with Jesus and moves backward to Adam. John begins with Him as God Himself.

One of the most probable causes of this variation is Matthew’s Jewish emphasis: (1) The geneological introduction [Abraham to Jesus], for example, stresses His royal descent or the kingly nature of Jesus. (2) He is also presented as One Who demonstrates appreciation of the authority of the Old Testament [5:17] but as One Who is superior to the Law [5:21-22; 27-28], the temple [12:6], the sabbath [12:8], the prophet [12:41], and the king [12:42]. (3) Matthew refers to “the kingdom” or reign of God 53 times¹ - compared with 16 in Mark, 40 in Luke, and 5 in John. (4) There are sixty-five Old Testament quotations in Matthew’s account, primarily because of his purpose to stress and undergird the authority of the claims he makes for Jesus as God’s Christ. (5) In a manner somewhat parallel to the first five books of the Old Testament, Matthew’s account emphasizes *1.* the new ethic of Jesus [“you have heard it said but I say unto you” in ch. 5-7]; *2.* the mystery of the kingdom of God [cp. (3) above and 13:3-52], *3.* the responsibility to carry out God’s mission on earth [10:5-42], *4.* the necessity of discipleship [18:3-35], and *5.* Messianic judgment [25:4-25, 46]. (6) Another common feature among Jewish writings is *gematria* or “the philosophical use of numbers so that each number has symbolic significance or meaning.” The number 1 symbolizes “self-existence.” The number 2 symbolizes companionship, courage, increase in strength, additional power. The number 3 symbolizes the divine nature or deity. The number 4 symbolizes cosmic order of the universe. The number 6 symbolizes striving for perfection but failure to achieve it. The number 7 symbolizes perfection or completion – just to mention a few. Matthew, for example, uses 7 petitions (5:8-13), parables (ch. 13:3-47), and pronouncement of woes (ch. 23).

Rather than a verse-by-verse commentary, this volume is arranged in sections or divisions (as noted in the *Overview*) where the primary thrust or central concepts of each section/division are highlighted. It, nevertheless, is an exhaustive commentary, covering each chapter and the verses in it. Thus, the main focus will be the main focus of each section of scripture. This will establish continuity and clarity without overcrowding readers with particulars which could shift attention away from Matthew’s central aim and purpose.

¹ See the Appendix in my *Harmony of the Gospels* for the exact location of this Jewish term in all four gospel accounts: archive.org/details/@mandm313.

Matthew: *Overview or Scripture in a Structural Format*

As seen in this overview, Jesus is the center around which all else is constructed.

- I PREPARATION for Jesus (1:1-4:11)**
 - A. Genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17)
 - B. Birth of Jesus (1:18-25)
 - C. Wise Men and Jesus (2:1-12)
 - D. Egypt and Jesus (2:13-23)
 - E. Forerunner of Jesus (3:1-12)
 - F. Baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)
 - G. Temptations of Jesus (4:1-11)

- II PRESENTATION of Jesus (4:12-14:36)**
 - A. Message of Jesus (4:12-17)
 - B. Calling from Jesus (4:18-22)
 - C. Credentials of Jesus (4:23-14:36)

- III PROFILES on Jesus (15:1-23:39)**
 - A. Conflicts with Jesus (15:1-16:12)
 - B. Instructions from Jesus (16:13-20:34)
 - C. Entry of Jesus (21:1-23:39)

- IV PRONOUNCEMENTS by Jesus (24:1-25:46)**
 - A. Perilous Times Foretold by Jesus (24:1-31)
 - B. Parable of Fig Tree by Jesus (24:32-35)
 - C. Parousia of Jesus (24:36-51)
 - D. Parables of Jesus (25:1-30)
 - C. Partitioning/Separating by Jesus (25:31-46)

- V PASSIONS of Jesus (26:1-27:66)**
 - A. Plot to Kill Jesus (26:1-5)
 - B. Precious Ointment for Jesus (26:6-13)
 - C. Price Agreement Concerning Betrayal of Jesus (26:14-16)
 - D. Passover & Lord's Supper with Jesus (26:17-35)
 - E. Praying of Jesus (26:36-46)
 - F. Partners against Jesus (26:47-75)
 - G. Pain of and Prophecy Concerning the Betrayer of Jesus (27:1-10)
 - H. Pilate and Jesus (27:11-26)
 - I. Praetorium and Mocking of Jesus (27:27-32)
 - J. Place of a Skull and Crucifixion of Jesus (27:33-56)
 - K. Pallbearer and Burial of Jesus (27:57-66)

- VI POWER of Jesus (28:1-20)**
 - A. Resurrection of Jesus (28:1-15)
 - B. Commission from Jesus (28:16-20)

I PREPARATION for Jesus (1:1-4:11)

A. Genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17)

1. Abraham to David: 14 Generations (1:1-6) – From the rise of Israel as a powerful nation to the rise of their greatest king.
2. Solomon to Babylon: 14 Generations (1:7-11) – From the rupture of Israel as a pitiful nation to their punishing exile in Babylon.
3. Babylon to Christ: 14 Generations (1:12-17) – From the rescue of Israel from disaster and tragedy to the triumph in Christ.

B. Birth of Jesus (1:18-25)

1. The chosen ones for the Chosen One (1:18-21).
2. The fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (1:22-23).
3. The obedience of Joseph to take Mary as his wife, but did not consummate the marriage until after the birth of the Chosen One (1:24-25).

C. Wise Men and Jesus (2:1-12)

1. Although historical, this passage also portends or indicates beforehand the coming of people to Him “from the east and the west” (8:11).
2. The birth of this “king of the Jews” was viewed as a threat to Herod and his plans to exterminate Him failed miserably.
3. The giving of gifts affirmed central truths about Him: Gold – for a king; Frankincense – for a priest; Myrr – for embalming the dead.²
4. God circumvents devious intentions.

D. Egypt and Jesus (2:13-23)

1. The escape to Egypt in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
2. The slaughter of children two years old and younger in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
3. The death of Herod paves the pathway for the return to Nazareth in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

E. Forerunner of Jesus (3:1-12)

1. The message of John the Baptist: repent for God’s sovereign rule has come in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
2. The message of John the Baptist requires evidence of repentance and not dependence upon being a physical descendant of Abraham.
3. Those who resist repentance will be destroyed. “To clean the threshing

²Barclay, 32.

floor means to remove all the straw and chaff and to leave a great heap of grain.”³ In other words, “the fruitless and useless would be rooted out.”⁴

F. Baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)

1. This public act serves as the pivot or point at which there is a transition from the ministry of John to that of Jesus.
2. This public act involves Jesus’ commitment to be the type Messiah God wants Him to be: a suffering servant who identifies with those in slavery to sin in order to set them free from sin’s dark and damning ways. It is His “*vow* of devotion to the approaching Messianic reign.”⁵
3. The public act fulfills all righteousness in the sense that it was the right or proper thing to do, as verified by the descent of God’s Spirit upon Him and the declaration of God ‘s pleasure in Him. “Not only did Jesus embody in himself the role of divine Son and royal Messiah (Psalm 2) as well as that of servant of God (Isaiah 42:1); but that the Messiah and the Suffering Servant were one and the same.”⁶

G. Temptations of Jesus (4:1-11)

1. The first temptation to dissuade Him from being a Suffering Servant was the lust of the flesh: satisfy your physical, material needs instead of the needs of other people.
2. The second temptation to dissuade Him from being a Suffering Servant was the lust of the eyes: a sensational display of God’s ability to rescue Him from danger.
3. The third temptation to dissuade Him from being a Suffering Servant was the pride of life: adopt worldly means and measures with dependance upon me rather than God; go forward by bowing and compromising with me and my maneuvers.

II PRESENTATION of Jesus (4:12-14:36)

A. Message of Jesus (4:12-17)

1. The prelude to the presentation of His message involved departing from Nazareth in Galilee to Capernaum in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
2. The power of His message was that of light overcoming darkness.
3. The proclamation of His message was “the application of prophetic authority to the present situation”⁷ – the reign of God demands changes!

³Lenski, 120.

⁴Barclay, 48.

⁵Broadus, 56.

⁶Stagg, 95.

⁷Barclay, 75.

B. Calling from Jesus (4:18-22)

1. The first two to receive a call from Jesus for discipleship were brothers, as were the second two.
2. The four of them were fishermen and were well acquainted with the components of patience and persistence which would be needed in their new task.
3. The fact that their response was immediate speaks volumes about them and signals the same sense of urgency still needed today.

C. Credentials of Jesus (4:23-14:36)

1. The summary of His ministry: teaching, preaching, healing (4:23-25).
2. The Sermon on the Mount: principles of life for kingdom people (5:1-7:29).
3. The significance of Jesus' authority in regard to:
 1. His words and works (8:1-9:34)
 - a. Healing of Leper (8:2-4) – Cleansing touch and Jewish legal requirements were not ignored.
 - b. Healing of Centurion's Servant at Capernaum (8:5-13) – The mission to Gentiles and the importance of faith; universal acceptance and reprehensible consequences for those without faith.
 - c. Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law and Others (8:14-17) – These miraculous works were in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about His redemptive earthly ministry.
 - d. Discipleship (8:18-22) – The demands for discipleship must not be ignored or taken lightly. The self-designation, "the Son of man" occurs 31 times in Matthew so as to dissociate Himself from political actions or aspirations. It portrays a link with the Suffering Servant notation in the gospels. Loyalty to Himself is not optional. "***The dead*** who are to ***bury their own dead*** are the spiritually dead."⁸
 - e. Calming of the Sea (8:23-27) – The authority of Jesus over nature itself provides assistance and assurance for faith in His limitless abilities. Therefore, "trust him in danger and distress. He heareth his people's cry; he giveth peace."⁹
 - f. Healing of Demoniac (8:28-34) – Jesus frees two men from the terrifying, tormenting effects of demonic attacks, thus providing strength over the stronghold of evil by exercising faith rather than fear.
 - g. Healing of Paralytic (9:1-8) – The focus here is on Jesus' authority to forgive sins. This forgiveness is openly demonstrated in the man's ability to walk.
 - h. Levi's Honoring of Jesus (9:9-13) – The acceptance of tax collectors and sinners, here exemplified in Levi/Matthew, sends shockwaves to the cynical but magnifies His mission of mercy.
 - i. Defense of Disciples (9:14-17) – The contrast between the disciples

⁸Stagg, 127.

⁹Williams, 336.

of John the Baptist and those of Jesus over fasting was puzzling to the former. Jesus replied with three clarifying illustrations: *fasting, as an expression of grief, is not normal at the time of great joy (v. 15); *an untidy patch only further damages an existing tear (v. 16); *the combination of new and old is absolutely unsuitable and likely destructive (v. 17).

- j. Healing of woman and raising of Jairus' Daughter (9:18-26) – The faith of the woman led to her healing. By faith, one may not only be raised from sleep but also raised from the dead, since Jesus has authority over even death.
 - k. Healing of Blind Men (9:27-31) – The term Son of David stresses Jesus' identity as the Messiah or Christ of God. Here is another example of the role of faith.
 - l. Healing of Deaf Man and reaction of Pharisees (9:32-34) – The crowds were amazed – not amused – but the Pharisees attributed this miracle to the prince of demons. If Jesus was right then they were wrong and they could not bring themselves to another viewpoint which collided with their prejudiced mindset. “Their eyes were so blinded by their own ideas that they could not see in Jesus Christ the truth and the power of God.”¹⁰
2. His compassion and commission (9:35-10:42)
- a. Tour of Galilee (9:35-38) – As in 4:23, this is a summary of Jesus' ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing. His compassion for the crowds was like that of a shepherd for his sheep. His prayer request for the disciples was not due to God's lack of desire to send but people's lack of desire and sense of duty to go.
 - b. Sending Forth of the Twelve (10:1-33) – Jesus gives authority to them in the fulfillment of their mission (10:1-4); Jesus' commission to them is now expanded (10:5-15); Jesus designates them as sheep sent forth in the midst of wolves (10:16-25); Instead of fearing the oppositions from those which they will surely encounter, their ultimate fear or reverential awe is God whose scrutiny extends to even the death of sparrows and the hairs on one's head (10:26-33).
 - c. Division (10:34-11:1) – The radical nature of their mission will lead to divisions within families which are already “infected and universally depraved [with] selfish interests.”¹¹ The sacrifice of one's life is never lost but leads to a greater good and its own reward. Encouragement underlies this ideology; and “even the smallest kindnesses shall not be unrewarded.”¹² 11:1 provides a summation of their teaching and preaching mission.

¹⁰Barclay, 352.

¹¹ MacDonald, 435.

¹² Williams, 417.

3. His receptions: positive and negative (11:2-12:50)
 - a. John the Baptist (11:2-19) – The arrest of John was mentioned in 4:12 and his imprisonment is, therefore, already known to the readers. Three variables about John are here circulated: (a) With some degree of confusion or perplexity, he questions the identity of Jesus, perhaps indicative of some degree of misunderstanding about the nature of Jesus’ Messianic mission. Jesus’s reply was anchored in deeds of mercy. Those who are not offended by such mission are “blessed” (11:2-6). (b) Jesus affirms and defends John’s identity as His forerunner – not merely a prophet (Malachi 3:1). He also affirms the greater privileges which His own disciples possess (11:7-11). (c) The kingdom or kingly reign of God has arrived in Jesus and always faces opposition from those who are resistant to this reign. “The kingdom is flaming zeal, and it turns the world upside down.”¹³ Jesus states that He, like Elijah, “exercises His functions and fulfills the prophecies regarding him.”¹⁴ Both He and John experienced rejection by people who were like “disagreeable and faultfinding children.”¹⁵ (11:12-19).
 - b. Woes on the cities (11:20-24) – These Galilean cities were condemned because they did not respond positively to His mighty works done in their midst. The only appropriate response to the miracles of Jesus is repentance.
 - c. Jesus’ prayer of gratitude for the basis of childlike trust as the avenue for access to God, coupled with His compassion for those who so respond (11:25-30).
 - d. Lord of Sabbath regarding grain (12:1-8) – This opposition to Jesus by the Pharisees was over His breaking of the Sabbath law, as they misunderstood and practiced it. Jesus’ defense was that both David and the temple priests were excluded from such rigidity in that the needs of human beings are more important than sabbath and ritual observances. Jesus’ claim of authority which exceeded the Sabbath and the Temple shook the sandals off their feet: there was no place left for them to stand.
 - e. Lord of Sabbath regarding healing (12:9-14) – Jesus flung in their faces the fact that acts of mercy for certain emergencies were permitted on this day. Thus, the value of human lives being rescued from life’s plight was certainly regarded by Him as a justifiable emergency. But not to them. He deserved death and and their plans to destroy Him were intensified.
 - f. Healing of multitude and prophetic servant (12:15-21) – The compassion of Jesus is contrasted with the chaos of the religious leaders. This account develops further “the themes of Jesus’

¹³Buttrick, 383.

¹⁴Johnson, 384.

¹⁵Stagg, 142.

forced withdrawal from Israel and the fulfillment of OT prophecy.”¹⁶
Jesus will not engage in any publicity stunts. Also, “instead of crushing people, He seeks to heal the morally wounded and to fan each spark of faith into a flame.”¹⁷

- g. Healing of demon possession/accusation of blasphemy (12:22-37) – The contemptuous treatment of His critics continues. “Their carnal hearts are unmasked, and the picture revealed is a sordid commentary on the fruits of legalistic religion.”¹⁸
 - h. Scribes and Pharisees demand a sign (12:38-45) – In an effort to put Jesus on the spot, their demand for a sign backfired as Jesus exposed them as being adulterous or faithless to God and/or not true to Him. The Jonah and Solomon syndrome illustrates the impending judgment for their refusal of faith in Him. In other words, “Israel has gone some way towards ridding herself of the major blots on her former record, through her verbal profession of allegiance to the Law, but seven worse devils have entered and possessed her religious life – bigotry, intolerance, prejudice and the rest of the sins of Judaism.”¹⁹
 - i. Jesus’ Mother and brothers (12:46-50) – In the context of His own human family, Jesus slides attention to the new family of God. This new family consists of those who carry out the will of God - the only True Father.
4. His parabolic teachings (13:1-52)
- a. Sower and Soils (13:1-23; 37-43) – When the seed of the Word of God is sown, it falls into 4 type soils. These soil types are revealed in four different ways of “hearing” – lighthearted, fainthearted, halfhearted, and wholehearted. In other words, the effectiveness of the sown Word “depends upon the responsiveness of its hearers, and this is in turn conditioned by the forces of the world, the flesh and the devil, which everywhere beset them.”²⁰
 - b. Wheat and Weeds (13:24-30; 36-43) – The main point is that the separation between evil people and righteous people will not occur until harvest time at the end of the age. Barclay’s five points are worthy of notation: “(i) there is always a hostile power in the world, seeking and waiting to destroy the good seed; (ii) it is hard to distinguish between those who are in the Kingdom and those who are not; (iii) do not be so quick with our judgments; (iv) judgment does come in the end; (v) the only person with the right to judge is God.”²¹
 - d. Mustard Seed (13:31-32) – Although the kingdom of God has a small beginning, its growth is guaranteed and those who may be

¹⁶Stagg, 147.

¹⁷Ibid, 148.

¹⁸Earle, 124.

¹⁹Neil, 342.

²⁰Cox, 109.

²¹74-75.

regarded as outsiders will eventually come under its provisions, principles, and productivity. There is no need to engage in demographics or statistics about size, for this parable is simply one of contrasts.

- e. Leaven (13:33) – A contrast also occurs in this parable. The kingdom does not come with outward, revolutionary changes by worldly powers but inward, redeeming changes by Godly creative powers. The kingdom of heaven “is not ‘like leaven,’ but like the prepared, risen dough. . . . The woman took a little leaven, hid it in dough and made large loaves of it.”²²
- f. Hidden Treasure (13:44) – This parable is spoken only to the disciples (cp. v. 36). It was customary in these days for one to hide treasures in the ground. The treasure found in the reign or rule of God is such that it is worth selling all that one has to secure it – the cost of discipleship. Indeed, “if a man fully discovers and appreciates the advantages of Christ’s service, he will be so anxious to make those blessings his own as to sacrifice any and everything that may be necessary for that purpose.”²³
- g. Costly Pearls (13:45-46) – This parable dramatically illustrates the value of pearls which were rare and costly and had little impact on the average person. Here, that rarity and cost are offset by its availability for all to possess. Indeed, “every circumstance – the persistent search of the pearl-collector, his passion for the ‘one pearl,’ his willingness to part with everything for the sake of it – serves to throw the preciousness of the pearl into bold relief. The kingdom of God is the ultimate blessing whose glory makes all other riches ‘of nothing worth.’”²⁴
- h. Dragnet (13:47-50) – This parable, like its cousin [the tares], basically teach the same lesson: in the final judgment day, the separation between good and evil will unmistakably transpire. Here, however, the picture is that of a large dragnet which drew up fish of every kind. When separated, the fish were either good or bad. Angels will be the separators between the just and the wicked at the end, and the latter will suffer accordingly. Indeed, “the Kingdom of God is like the work of fishing with a drag-net, for the appeal [to the kingdom] is made to all indiscriminately, and yet in the nature of things it is selective; and, let us recall, this selection *is* divine judgment, though men pass it upon themselves by their ultimate attitude to the appeal.”²⁵

As Morgan notes, “these parables, pictures, stories reveal His view of the Kingdom, not in its eternal and abiding sense, but in its his-

²²Jeremias, 102, 146.

²³Broadus, 305.

²⁴Buttrick, 28.

²⁵Dodd, 152.

tory in the age which He had initiated by His coming into the world.”²⁶

5. His mixture of rejection/popularity among various people (13:53-14:36)
 - a. Last visit to Nazareth (13:53-58) – This is another summary statement of his final visit to Nazareth where He experienced rejection and ridicule. Their lack of faith suspended any “mighty works there.”
 - b. Herod and the death of John the Baptist (14:1-12) – Herod’s earlier execution of John the Baptist was due to the request of his brother’s wife, Herodias. Herod’s delusion that Jesus was the resurrected John was terrifying. Stagg suggests that the meaning is that “Jesus’ prophetic message was like hearing John once more.”²⁷
 - c. Feeding of 5,000 (14:13-21) – This is the only miracle story recorded in all four gospel accounts (Mk. 6:35-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-14). However, Matthew is the only one which adds, “beside women and children.” Jesus gave material bread for those who were hungry, and also gives spiritual bread or eternal life to those whose hunger exceeds physical hunger. The twelve baskets denote the sufficiency of Jesus’ provisions for the crowd, as well as His disciples.
 - d. Refusal to be political king (14:22-23) – Jesus did not come to set up a political kingdom so as to oppose and demolish the rule of Rome. His departure from the crowd in order that He might pray alone was to avoid any rush toward a revolt against Rome. “Jesus not only prayed regularly and frequently, but when any special exigency in his life arose he spent much time in special prayer.”²⁸
 - e. Walking on water (14:24-33) – Here Matthew sets forth a cluster of nature miracles: Jesus’ walking on the water, Peter’s walking on the water, and the calming of the sea storm. The purpose behind it all was to awaken faith in Him as the Son of God and the attending worship which such awakening creates.
 - f. Gennesaret (14:34-36) – Despite the expenditure of energy in the previous encounters, Jesus still retains His sympathy and/or philanthropic concern for others in the land of Gennesaret. He did not just tell others that God cared, He actively demonstrated such care by restoring them to health. As Barclay notes, “there is little use preaching the love of God in words without showing the love of God in action.”²⁹

III PROFILES on Jesus (15:1-23:39)

²⁶42.

²⁷161.

²⁸Broadus, 326-327.

²⁹108.

A. Conflicts with Jesus (15:1-16:12)

1. Pharisees' Reproachment of Jesus (15:1-20)

This conflict with the Pharisees was over external observances and internal obedience, or the righteousness of the law vs. the righteousness of God which is by faith. That is, the issue centered in ceremonial uncleanness (15:1-9) and moral uncleanness (15:10-20).

2. Withdrawal to Tyre & Sidon & Healing (15:21-28)

Jesus withdraws to Phoenicia, a heathen land, to be alone with His disciples. However, a Canaanite woman pleads for His mercy about her demon-possessed daughter. Her persistent faith, despite being a heathen, resulted in the healing of her daughter.

3. Withdrawal to Decapolis & Healings (15:29-31)

This is a general summary of all sorts of healings among great numbers of people. The result was the rendering of praise and glory to God from Gentiles. This foreshadows the expanding nature of the gospel of Jesus' mission.

4. Feeding of 4,000 (15:32-38)

The feeding of 5,000 (14:13-21) was among the Jews, while the feeding of 4,000 here was among the Gentiles. This represents another foreshadowing of the expanding nature of the gospel. "This would trace back to Jesus a concern for the larger world, even though he concentrated his ministry upon 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'"³⁰

5. Magadan/Dalmanutha & Attack of Pharisees/Sadducees (15:39-16:4)

Magadan was the hometown of Mary Magdalene. Although no love was lost between the Pharisees and Sadducees, when a common enemy is found in Jesus, a making of strange bedfellows occurs. Their demand for a sign was right before them, but their weather-wise eyes were blind to the obvious. Just as it was in the days of Jonah when and where Jonah himself was the message and messenger from God, Jesus stands as the final and Ultimate Message and Messenger from God. To close one's eyes to Him is a "collision course to ruin."³¹

6. Confrontation of Disciples (16:5-12)

Leaven symbolizes evil and such was the nature of the Pharisees and

³⁰Stagg, 169.

³¹Ibid, 170.

Sadducees and their teachings. The misunderstanding of His disciples about His meaning of the word “bread,” created a confrontation which was quickly comprehended and corrected. In essence, Jesus is saying: “The miraculous feedings are symbols of my teaching, which will always be sufficient for you. You do not need the teaching of these false leaders, and you must beware of it.”³²

B. Instructions from Jesus (16:13-20:34)

1. Confession of Christ (16:13-20)

Despite the varied assessments of Jesus (hate, fear, love, adoration, etc.), Peter’s confession of Christ as the Son of the living God rang so loudly in the ears of Jesus that He crowned his confession as the foundation upon which the Church would arise and thrive. Indeed, “the spirit of St. Peter’s confession is typical of the Christian heroism that can withstand all attacks of doubt or opposition.”³³

2. Prediction of Death & Resurrection (16:21-26)

The necessity of going to Jerusalem was due to His supreme sacrifice; the same place where all other sacrifices had occurred. Peter’s rebuke was another attempt for Satan to turn Him aside from this sacrifice. All that was contrary to God’s will must be resisted. The way of the cross was not only for Himself but for all who follow Him. Denial of oneself and death to self-determination are two hallmarks of Christian faithfulness and discipleship. As Bonhoeffer declared, “Discipleship means adherence to the person of Jesus, and therefore submission to the law of Christ which is the law of the cross.”³⁴

3. Coming of the Son of Man (16:27-28)

This coming – whether in the Transfiguration, the resurrection, the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans, the day of Pentecost, or the final day of judgment – steams with a mixture of urgency, warning, and some degree of warming, and all in the arena of the demands of discipleship. After all, even death would not be defeated. The only way to save life is to lose it.

While numerous offerings exist as to the exact nature of His coming, the words of Williams may be well-worth weighing: “There is some truth in all the views: there was some display of Christ’s kingdom at the Transfiguration; another at his resurrection, and the events consequent thereupon, but the great one was when the overthrow of Jerusalem and its temple made way for the full establishment and development of the gospel, putting

³²Johnson, 447.

³³153.

³⁴77.

an end to the first dispensation.”³⁵ Indeed, Williams again, says that “the dissolution of the Jewish polity is the event signified.”³⁶ Whatever position one may take on the precise meaning of this verse, “what is assured is that the death of Jesus was not to be his defeat, for he would come again as Judge and as King!”³⁷

4. Transfiguration (17:1-8)

This was the moment of superlative spiritual significance. This is also recorded in Mk. 9:2-8 and Lk. 9:28-36. “Matthew describes the Transfiguration as involving splendor shining from Jesus’ face and garments. This description, together with the observation that the disciples were overcome by awe when they heard the voice from the cloud (vv. 5f.), suggests that this Gospel intends to describe Jesus more as the new Moses than as the Suffering Servant. In giving a longer version of the words from the cloud (v. 5), Matthew reveals an interest in validating Peter’s confession that Jesus, like Israel, was the son of obedience and, as such, the Lord of the new Israel (16:16).”³⁸

5. Puzzlement Over Resurrection & Elijah/John the Baptist (17:9-13)

As manifold as the Transformation was, its incredibility would be relegated when the resurrection occurred, for this would leave no doubt that He was God. The forecast of the resurrection, however, seemed to enter one ear and out the other among the disciples. Their question about the coming of Elijah actually reflected the common idea of a conquering Messiah which was high among the Jews and the disciples were certainly impacted by this ideology. However, Elijah came in John the Baptist but few recognized his true character and conduct as the precursor to the Messiah. The disciples were slow to correlate the words of Jesus in 14:10, 14 about John – and many other truths – but were finally able to see and understand it.

6. Healing of Demoniac (17:14-21)

This additional healing episode contrasted the ability of Jesus and the lack of such ability by the disciples, and is attributed to their adherence to the typical features of the immediate generation: faithless and perverse. Even the smallest particle of faith would have proven sufficient for healing the boy. With the use of hyperbole, Jesus adapts a common proverb to reinforce the potential of great ventures in the realm of faith. As Williams notes, “the man of faith

³⁵ 141.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Stagg, 177.

³⁸ Scharlemann, 888.

is practically omnipotent: moral and material difficulties vanish before him.”³⁹

7. Prediction of Death & Resurrection (17:22-23)

Jesus again seeks to prepare them for His death and resurrection. Their distress was apparently the result of hearing about His death but not His resurrection. “This demonstrates the extent to which one can be tone-deaf to what he does not want to hear. Ears are to hear with, but they do not always hear (13:9; 17:5). The disciples do not yet understand, but on this second occasion they at least do not rebuke Jesus.”⁴⁰

8. Temple Tax (17:24-27)

The Temple in Jerusalem was costly to operate – for many reasons, some of which were legitimate. The obligation of support was a duty to which even Jesus, though somewhat exempt, nevertheless, offered support. There was no need to put a stumbling-block into the pathway of others. So, for the Jews, and obviously for the Christians as well, “however unpleasant they may be, the duties of a citizen must be shouldered. It tells us that Christianity and good citizenship go hand in hand. The Christian who exempts himself from the duties of good citizenship is not only failing in citizenship, he is also failing in Christianity.”⁴¹

9. Childlikeness (18:1-6)

To even ask the question about who is the greatest in the kingdom indicates their very misunderstanding of the case. So, to correct the confusion, a child is set forth for clarification. Two traits which are true of children and should be true for Christians are: dependence and trust. Since a child must be treated as one who needs dependence and trust, so with Christ. Failure to treat a child accordingly is a failure to treat Christ in the same manner. Any treatment of a child which would poison rather than nurture the traits of dependence and trust is sin.

10. Discipleship (18:7-14)

At least one aspect of Christian discipleship is how we treat others – especially children or those whose basic posture of life hinges on dependence and trust. To cause a child or “little ones” to falter in the faith is “sin.” After all, there are no unimportant people in Christianity –

³⁹178.

⁴⁰Stagg, 179.

⁴¹Barclay, 170-171.

children, neglected ones, slaves, and others who are disciples who may be subject to various forms of prejudice, exploitation, abuse, etc. The very presence of God's Guardian Angels over them underscores this truth. Indeed, "the youngest, the weakest, the sickliest of His flock is as dear to Him as the strongest."⁴²

11. Essentials (18:15-35)

The guidelines for exercising church discipline are here enumerated. During such adventures, the presence of God will preside. In fact, "the disciplines imposed by the church, in the spirit of love and in the way Jesus directed, have God's sanction upon them."⁴³ Plus, the exercise of forgiveness should not be based on demographics or other measuring notes. The rabbis tended to suggest a limit of no more than three. However, "such numerical questions about the duty of forgiveness are quite opposed to the Christian spirit."⁴⁴ The idea is that of limitlessness. As Buttrick observes, the limits of forgiveness are not counted "in our heads but in our hearts."⁴⁵ Earle calls this "celestial arithmetic."⁴⁶ The parable of the unmerciful servant is found only in Matthew to boldly and pragmatically illustrate the principle of forgiveness. Failure to adopt and/or implement this principle in life's struggles has tragic consequences. As Broadus notes, "Jesus has no sense of incongruity between the Fatherhood of God and the strange work of stern judgment on the unmerciful. Neither was there room for such a feeling. Just because God is a Father, and because his inmost spirit is love, he must abhor a spirit so utterly alien to his own. It is only what we should expect, that under the government of a gracious God the spirit of mercilessness should have judgment without mercy."⁴⁷

12. Divorce and Marriage (19:1-12)

Following additional healings in the region of Judea, Jesus was confronted by questions about divorce and marriage by the Pharisees and His disciples. He sends them straight to scripture for the answer. They were not persuaded by His reply and flung the Mosaic rule in His face. After correcting their misquotation, noting that Moses permitted divorce for temporary reasons, but that he did not have the final word on the subject. This permission was not God's design at the beginning and deviated from His intentions. The disciples concluded that it was not good to marry. Jesus noted that some may

⁴²Ryle, 223.

⁴³Earle, 172.

⁴⁴Carr, 98.

⁴⁵475.

⁴⁶173.

⁴⁷393.

serve God better by marrying and others by staying single. As Bruce observes, “Jesus lifts the whole subject up out of the low region of mere personal taste, pleasure, or convenience, into the high region of the Kingdom of God and its claims.”⁴⁸

13. Childlikeness (19:13-15)

The apparent custom of the day was for children to be brought to the synagogue to receive blessings from the rabbis or teachers. His disciples, however, were not in favor of this custom and rebuked the people for carrying out this custom. To them, it seemed of secondary importance, at best, and perhaps interfered with their time with Him. Jesus, therefore, exercised His own rebuke to them, citing that childlikeness was of the essence in the Christian faith. Carr states: “Love, simplicity of faith, innocence, and above all, humility, are the ideal characteristics of little children, and of the subjects of the kingdom.”⁴⁹

14. Rich Young Ruler (19:16-30)

V. 20 indicates that he was “young,” v. 22 that he had “great possessions,” while the parallel accounts in Mk. 10:22 also refers to his “great possessions,” and Lk. 18:18 designates him as a “ruler,” and v. 23 that he was “very rich.” When faced with the choice of following Jesus and departing from all his riches, he folded. Jesus then discourses on the dangers or perils of riches.” Verse 30 is a rebuke to Peter’s self-complacency. Though he was the **first** of the disciples, if he showed the wrong spirit he would be **last**. And Christians who in the eyes of the world are **last** will be **first**.”⁵⁰

15. Parable of Workers in the Vineyard (20:1-16)

This parable portrays the actual working conditions of the day: cheap pay, labour exchange, hired labourers of the lowest class of people, and normal Jewish hours – “a vivid picture of the kind of thing which could happen in the market-place of any Jewish village or town any day, when the grape harvest was being rushed in to beat the rains.”⁵¹ Its purpose is “the vindication of the gospel against its critics.”⁵² Dodd maintains that “it is a striking picture of the divine generosity which gives without regard to the measures of strict justice. But its ‘setting in life’ must surely be sought in the facts of the ministry of Jesus. The divine generosity was specifically exhibited in the calling of publicans and sinners,

⁴⁸247.

⁴⁹101.

⁵⁰Earle, 183.

⁵¹Barclay, 223).

⁵²Jeremias, 136.

who had no merit before God. The Kingdom of God is like that. Such is Jesus' retort to the complaints of the legally minded who cavilled at Him as the friend of publicans and sinners."⁵³ It is "a warning to the disciples, to the Jews," and captures "the comfort of God, the compassion of God, and the generosity of God."⁵⁴

16. Prediction of Death & Resurrection (20:17-19)

This is the third time (16:21; 17:22-23) that Jesus warned the disciples about His approaching death and resurrection. These verses involve the conjoined efforts of both Jews and Gentiles in His execution. This is the first time that Jesus informed His disciples of the nature of His forthcoming death. Their ears were opened to the sad news but became stone deaf when He concluded that "He will be raised on the third day." The words "fell upon ears prejudiced to a certain erroneous conviction, which events alone could eradicate."⁵⁵

17. A Ridiculed Request (20:20-28)

A mother's request for beneficial outcomes for her children is not uncommon. In the midst of worshipping, however, her request was not regarded as an affirmative act. In fact, he asked both her and her sons a probing question about what they had not anticipated. Joy and sorrow, blessing and affliction are part of the pathways they will now travel. They answered in the affirmative but likely spoke without thinking. They seemingly had already forgotten what Jesus just said about His own death. He now speaks of theirs. Serving others, not being served by others, was somewhat alien to the thinking of this mother and sons. Jesus, therefore, ridicules their request. The ten disciples who heard about the mother's request joined in with the ridiculing. After all, "high places of authority and dominion belong to worldly kingdoms."⁵⁶ Service in the kingdom of God is measured by sacrifice as the avenue to "the practice of greatness."⁵⁷

18. Healing of Blind Men (20:29-34)

These two blind men were urgent, and persistent in their shouted cries for help. The crowd was bothered by such shouting but they were not deterred. They regarded Him as the Messiah of God, the Son of David. Even though their ideas about the Messiah were sprinkled with false understandings about the kingdom and the desire and drive for worldly power, Jesus honored their half-baked faith and healed them. Their gratitude lead them to follow Him. Their freshly generated "sight"

⁵³94-95.

⁵⁴Barclay, 224-225.

⁵⁵Williams, 280.

⁵⁶Broadus, 418.

⁵⁷Earle, 188.

caused them to see what many others did not. The opening of their physical eyes was also an opening of “the eyes of their mind as to Christ’s power and will.”⁵⁸ As Matthew Henry notes, “misery is the object of mercy. It was the tender mercy of our God, that gave light and sight to them that sat in darkness. None follow Christ blindfold. He first by his grace opens the eyes, and so draws their hearts after him.”⁵⁹

C. Entry of Jesus (21:1-23:39)

1. Cooperation with Jesus (21:1-11)

The approach and entry of Jesus into Jerusalem occurred at a very busy time, crowd wise. People from all every corner of the then known world entered the city with high expectations about religious matters. Jesus’ entry of riding upon an ass which had never been ridden by anyone before was in fulfillment of OT prophecy, a note of spiritual significance. The cry of the people – “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed in the name of the Lord is he who comes. Hosanna in the highest” – was a genuine cry for deliverance from their oppressors. This was a dramatic act by both Jesus and the crowd with Messianic overtones. Jesus was proclaiming Himself as the Messiah of God but not in accordance with popular expectations. “So when Jesus claimed to be king, he claimed to be the king of peace. He showed that he came, not to destroy, but to love; not to condemn, but to help; not in the might of arms, but in the strength of love.”⁶⁰ This entry was characterized by profound courage and filled with claims which ran counter to popular ideations. There was a magnetic appeal, though filled with misunderstandings, as will soon be realized.

2. Cleansing of Temple by Jesus (21:12-17)

Not everyone in Temple service were wicked or bad people. The worship of God was sincerely practiced regularly by many of the people. But in the Court of the Gentiles various forms of shameless exploitation of the poor and humble was taking place. This aroused the wrath of Jesus. The worship of God was actually being turned into a money-making scheme and the response of Jesus left no doubt as to His stance on the matter. His anger was not directed to everyone in the Temple, only those who were guilty of abuse. The chief priests and Scribes reacted angrily to the anger of Jesus. His response was a scriptural one: “There are truths which only the simple in hearts can see and which are hidden from the wise and learned and sophisticated. There are many times when heaven

⁵⁸Bruce, 260.

⁵⁹1308.

⁶⁰Barclay, 243.

is nearer the child than it is to the cleverest of men.”⁶¹ So this kickoff to His expanding ministry “was probably the immediate cause of Christ’s death.”⁶²

3. Cursing of Fig Tree by Jesus (21:18-22)

This episode is also found in Mk. 11:12-24, 20-26 where a fuller account occurs. The fig tree was typically rather large: 3 ft. thick at the base; 15-20 ft high, and branches ranging from 25-30 ft. It provide a shade from the scorching sun which was no minor matter. It is best to understand this event both literally and symbolically. Literally, the tree was useless at this time of the season, and after the pronouncement of Jesus, it withered at once. Symbolically, its uselessness portrayed the nation of Israel which professed faith in God but in practice they killed the Son of God and stood condemned. They withered away as far as usefulness to God was concerned. The concluding remarks about prayer are hyperbolic in nature: prayer does not always provide deliverance from a situation but it does provide the ability to transform it in accordance with God’s will. Prayer does not represent an escape hatch but it does enable one to face a situation in a gallant and victorious way which cannot be measured by worldly standards. Buttrick observes: “The real mountain is our unregenerate nature. That can be cast into the sea if we have faith, and if the faith lives in prayer. . . . Faith and prayer can even move the mountain of human self-will that offers God profession instead of practice.”⁶³

4. Challenging of Jesus (21:23-27)

As Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and elders challenged and questioned His authority for cleansing the temple. He answered their question with a question of His own about the baptism of John – a rather typical response in Jewish dialogues/discussions. If they replied that it was from heaven/God, then why did they not accept it? If they replied that it was from man (since he was regarded as a prophet), then they would be in trouble with the crowd. They themselves were challenged: “They did not wish to have a public discussion of John’s authority [or that of Jesus]. Jesus therefore refused to deal with them further. In effect, this was to reject their authority to examine him.”

5. Comparisons by Jesus (21:28-22:14)

Jesus now rebukes the rulers by means of three parables:

a. Two sons (21:28-32)

⁶¹Barclay, 249.

⁶²Buttrick, 504.

⁶³508.

One son represents the Jewish leaders who said that they would be obedient to God but wound up not doing so.
The other son represents the taxgatherers and harlots who preferred to do things their way but wound up taking God's way.

b. The wicked vinegrowers (21:33-46)

The vineyard is none other than the nation of Israel. The owner of the vineyard is God. The cultivators of the vineyard are Israel's religious leaders. They were privileged and responsible to God for the nation's welfare. The prophets were those sent by God for correction but were mostly rejected and killed. The son was none other than Jesus. He was rejected and killed also. The chief priests and the Pharisees correctly concluded that He was talking about them. God's reign over them would be given to a nation – the Christian church – composed of both Gentiles and Jews who would bring forth the fruit of faith. Their determination to rid themselves of Him escalated but due to His prophetic popularity with the crowds His arrest was aborted.

c. The wedding feast (22:1-14)

The king is God Who twice invites people to the marriage feast of His son. To decline this invitation, for various reasons, is to defy the invitation and authority of God and the consequence of this refusal is destruction. "More amazing than God's gracious invitation to men to sit at his table is man's indifference, refusal, and even defiance."⁶⁴ Reference is to the Jews. The second invitation was to the Gentiles who accepted the invitation. The religious leaders "were left out of the feast by their own act, and their places taken by rag-tag-and-bobtail."⁶⁵ The lesson is clear: (i) not all who are called will respond, and (ii) the one who enters without a wedding garment "is a type of those who prefer their own righteousness to the righteousness provided by Christ. Such will be cast into outer darkness."⁶⁶

6. Caesar and Jesus (22:15-22)

The issue of civil obedience is raised in this parable where two enemy forces combined in efforts to back Jesus into an inescapable corner. The Pharisees opposed paying taxes to Caesar and the Herodians supported it. Jesus, on the other hand, placed them into an inescapable corner with a single, simply question. "Christianity does not interfere with the obedience due to the laws under which we live. . . . The Christian

⁶⁴Stagg, 204.

⁶⁵Dodd, 93.

⁶⁶Earle, 199.

must be just in his dealings, obedient to the law, and give God all his dues – your whole heart.”⁶⁷ As Lenski so wisely declares: “Well might all who heard the answer of Jesus ‘marvel’; the pity is that they did no more.”⁶⁸

7. Confutation of Sadducees & Pharisees by Jesus (22:23-46)

The Sadducees maintained that there was no such thing as resurrection. They, therefore, tried to trap Jesus with a question about marriage since He did maintain its reality. Instead, He trapped them over their ignorance of scripture and the power of God. After all, in the next life, there is no marriage. They were suffocated in silence.

One of the lawyers among the Pharisees inquired about the greatest commandment. His motive was likely to express gratitude that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees. Jesus’ reply was from their own acknowledged scripture: Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18. As Barclay notes: “To be truly religious is to love God and to love the men whom God made in his own image; and to love God and man, not with a nebulous sentimentality, but with total commitment which issues in devotion to God and practical service of men.”⁶⁹

Jesus, in turn, poses His own question about whose son the Pharisees thought the Messiah to be. He reasoned that He could not just be David’s son but is far more than that, since David called Him “Lord.” Therefore, the Messiah could not be the political type which was commonly expected among the Jews. The Pharisees, therefore, were also silenced.

8. Condemnation of Scribes & Pharisees by Jesus (23:1-36)

As the acknowledged interpreters of the Jewish Law, the Scribes, being mostly Pharisees, sat on Moses’ seat. However, what they preached and what they practiced were not always the same. They, therefore, were classified as hypocrites, even loving the outward appearance at the expense of inward actuality. Their leadership role is indicated in the term “master” (*kathegetes* – v. 10) which appears here only in the NT. However, it was a failure of massive proportions. It precipitated the pronouncements of seven “woes” upon them (vs. 13-32) and the declaration of certain judgment (vs. 33-36).

9. Compassion and Concern of Jesus (23:37-39)

The weeping of Jesus over Jerusalem and His passionate concern revealed in this double pronouncement, as well as the crushing and clashing distinction between “I would” but “you would not.” To be “forsaken and desolate”

⁶⁷Caffin, 372.

⁶⁸868.

⁶⁹279.

may refer to “the ruin of the Temple, the city, the nation, or all.”⁷⁰ Lenski maintains that the closing words were addressed to the Jewish hearers to whom Jesus was directly speaking. They would be among the “ye” (plural: *humin, humon, humin*) in the last two verses who would “acclaim Jesus as the blessed Messiah”⁷¹ – perhaps in the near future, as recorded in Acts. Others that it refers to “the second coming.”⁷² Johnson notes: “Luke 13:35 puts this saying long before the Triumphal Entry and so makes it a prophecy of that event, but in Matthew, Jesus has already been hailed in this fashion (21:9). Here the saying is an immediate introduction to the prophecy of doom, and to Matthew it must mean: ‘You will not see me again until I return in glory’ (24:30-31).”⁷³

IV PRONOUNCEMENTS by Jesus (24:1-25:46)

A. Perilous Times Foretold by Jesus (24:1-31)

Vs. 1-2: Jesus predicted to the disciples the destruction of the temple which took place at the end of the Jewish-Roman war (A.D. 66-70). However, anyone living in the early part of the first century could see the war coming because of the agitation of the right wing Jews for open revolt against Rome. Many had hopes the Messiah would come and lead them in this regard. Some took advantage of this and claimed to be the Messiah.

V. 3: The disciples questioned Jesus about “these things” (the destruction of the temple and the war) and about the “sign of your coming and the consummation of the age.” There are two questions but may be the same thing.

Vs. 4-5: This is a warning that depicts Jesus’ concern for His disciples. If they labored under the same concept of Messiah as many of the Jews (that Messiah was a military leader), they would be easily led astray by charlatans.

Vs. 6-12: Here Jesus characterized the period in which His disciples must begin and continue with the proclamation of the gospel. They were not to take the catastrophes, wars, rebellions, and persecution as indications that the consummation of the world was at hand (v. 6b). There would be a long period in which the disciples/church would give its witness to the world (v. 8). The events in the immediate future were only the beginning (v. 8). The great cost of proclaiming the gospel are indicated in vs. 9-12.

Vs. 13-14: This exact sentence is found in 10:22 in the context of Jesus’ statements about the persecution which His disciples would suffer. Taken together, both statements declare that the disciple who continually stands firm (in the face of persecution) will be saved, delivered, rescued, preserved by God. Victory is in commitment without regard for the cost of discipleship. V. 14 has often been used as evidence for the nearness of the consummation of the present time. The overall context, however, and the trials the

⁷⁰Stagg, 215.

⁷¹926; cp. Bruce, 287.

⁷²Broadus, 478; Earle, 213; Stagg, 215.

⁷³541.

disciples faced, may better be seen as a guarantee that the gospel would survive the wars and persecutions which threatened them. Neither the persecution by the Jews nor the fall of Jerusalem would prevent the proclamation of the gospel and its spread (cp. Acts). The early disciples/Christians/Church would survive the tumultuous events of that century.

Vs. 15-28: This passage contains a warning to the disciples against becoming involved in the messianic speculations which would flood Jerusalem during the time of the Jewish revolt. The ‘abomination of desolation’ refers to the armies of Titus, the Roman General, in the temple area in A.D. 70. The updated account of this passage in Lk. 21:20 clearly refers to the Jewish-Roman war and Titus’ seige of the city. There would be no time to return to their residences for any possessions (vs. 17-18). They should hope that travel would not be difficult lest they be unable to escape the seige of the Romans (vs. 21-22). Vs. 23-28 contain Jesus’ warning against those who would use the turmoil to claim that Messiah was coming to a chosen few. Many of the Zealots rallied to those who sought to gain armies by directing people to go to secret places. Jesus warned that they would not find Him in secret. His coming would be apparent or evident to all (vs. 27-28).

Vs. 29-31: Bible scholars disagree as to whether these verses refer to the events in the first century or the end of the age. There are several reasons to prefer the former: (a) the passage which follows (vs. 32-33) gives signs which must be applied to the first century or be inconsistent with the parables in ch. 24-25 which illustrate that the end of the age will come as a thief or without warning; (b) symbolic or apocalyptic language was often used to describe such periods in human history (Joel, Isaiah, Ezekiel). Quotations from Joel, very much like the ones in these verses, were used in Acts 2 by Peter to explain the experiences of Pentecost; cp. Mt. 24:29 Acts 2:20; (c) the Son of Man passages are used in the Synoptic Gospels in a way that associates the victory of the Son of Man with His resurrection and exaltation (vindication) as Lord of the Church. He is clearly vindicated in the fact that a ragtag band of disciples survived these disasters as they were dependent upon His presence beyond the crucifixion; (d) the sending of the messengers/angels in v. 31 sounds like the work of the church in the church age beyond the catastrophes of the first century; (e) the technical word for the “coming” (*parousia*) of Christ at the end of the age is not used until v. 39, where the suddenness of the end is emphasized. Instead, the word used in this verse is *erchomai*. The “coming” of the Son of Man with great power and glory is His coming in the work of the Church (cp. Acts 1:1; Col. 1:27. The gathering of the elect from every direction and from the limits of the heavens is the evangelistic task of the Church (v. 31).

B. Parable of the Fig Tree (24:32-35)

Vs. 32-35: These verses seem to be given about something which unlike “that day and hour” of v. 36 are accompanied by signs which will stand as a warning. The parable of the fig tree (vs. 32-35) takes “a simple illustration

from Nature that there are signs in Nature by which we can know Summer is coming.”⁷⁴ Even so with the coming of the Son of Man. The words, “all these things” in v. 33 seem to refer to events surrounding the Jewish revolt against Rome. The verb in the dependent clause of v. 33 does not indicate its subject. It may be translated, “know that *it is* near at the door.” That which is near must be something that took place within a lifetime of Jesus’ death (“this generation,” v. 34). “The predictions he has made will receive a fulfillment within that generation.”⁷⁵ Therefore, that these events which are predictable if the disciples will only be alert to what is happening must be identified with events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in that time. The signs of these times are the wars and rumors of wars that should prevent the disciples from becoming too closely attached to Jerusalem. They must be willing to scatter from Jerusalem if they were to proclaim the gospel to all (Acts 1:8).

C. Parousia of Jesus (24:36-51)

Vs. 36-51: There is a change of subject in v. 36: “Now concerning that day and hour . . .” All that is said about “that day and hour” in vs. 36-51 is that no one except God knows when. This leads one to think that here alone in Matthew 24 does Jesus talk about the end of the age. In v. 36, the words “neither the Son” appear after the words, “not even the angels in heaven.” This would be further evidence that Jesus did not give any signs of the end of the world, since He did not know when that would be. The comparison of the parousia with the time of Noah also emphasizes the suddenness of that event (vs. 37-39). So also does the picture of the two in the field (vs. 40-41) and the picture of the householder and the thief (v. 43). V. 44 contains, again, the central warning, “Be prepared.” The parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants illustrates how disciples can be ready (vs. 45-51). They must do what they know their Lord wants them to do daily rather than speculating about when He will come in order that they might be prepared only on the last day. The real disciple does God’s will because of love, not fear. The two parables in ch. 25 illustrate this same truth.

D. Parables of Jesus (25:1-30)

Vs. 1-13: Parable of the Ten Virgins – The coming of Jesus will be a joyful event. His coming is uncertain and some sort of delay may be expected. Preparation for His coming must be a permanent state of being. That is, “this parable sets forth the necessity of having and retaining grace unto the end, in order to be able to welcome the advent of Christ. The duty of watchfulness and preparation for the great day is set forth (v. 13). The bridegroom is not in the town, but somewhere at a distance and the exact hour of his arrival is uncertain. They wait for the summons to go forth and meet the bridegroom and conduct him to the bridal-place; and when the signal is given that he is ap-

⁷⁴Morgan, 144.

⁷⁵Broadus, 492.

proaching, they set forth on the road, each bearing her lamp.”⁷⁶ The wise ones will be prepared and the foolish ones will not. V. 13 is a repetition of v. 24:42 – since we are ignorant of that day, “we must be constantly watching.”⁷⁷

Vs. 14-30: Parable of the Talents – God gives greater gifts to those who are faithful with a few talents, and those who refuse to use the talents they have wind up losing them. This is “a warning to the followers of Christ that at His coming He will take account of the way in which they have borne their special responsibilities.”⁷⁸ God gives different gifts to different people. But whatever it is we are given, it is to be used in God’s service. One must never be contented with simply receiving without using, sharing, or investing in the lives of others whatever that gift may be. For as the old saying goes, the reward of work well done is more work to do. The one who refused to use the one talent he was given refers to the scribes and Pharisees. Christianity is an adventure-in-the-making and those who fail to actively participate in this adventure disqualify themselves from positive contributions to its development.

D. Partitioning/Separating by Jesus (25:31-46)

This passage of judgment which is based on works done or not done is not in conflict with faith but evidences of faith or the lack thereof. This time of judgment is individual in nature even though “before Him shall be gathered all nations.” The twofold divisions in this section of scripture are plain: sheep (vs. 34-40) and goats (41-46). “Works of mercy are not the only basis upon which eternal rewards and punishments are based. But can any man read these words of Jesus and believe that a Christian dares be unconcerned and inactive when his fellowman is in need?”⁷⁹ Commendation or condemnation hinge on acts of compassion and active, practical steps to meet the needs of the needy – or the avoidance of such. Tasker ties together the three elements highlighted in this chapter: “The door is shut against the foolish virgins for their negligence; the unenterprising servant is cast out as good-for-nothing for doing nothing; and those *on the left hand* are severely punished for failing to notice the many opportunities for showing kindness which had been given them.”⁸⁰ Sins of omission or things not done evidence the lack of faith and lead to eternal punishment. Service to others evidences the possession of faith and leads to eternal life in its consummative state. Broadus provides valuable perspectives on eternal punishment and general objections brought against “the obvious meaning of our Lord’s language: linguistic, metaphysical, and moral.”⁸¹

⁷⁶Williams, 471-472.

⁷⁷Lenski, 971.

⁷⁸Dodd, 115.

⁷⁹Earle, 228.

⁸⁰239.

⁸¹512-515.

V **PASSIONS of Jesus** (26:1-27:66)

A. Plot to Kill Jesus (26:1-5)

This is the fourth and final prediction of His impending death. Here details about it are added. The religious leaders (the Sanhedrin) had heard about His teachings and it had only increased their determination for condemnation. Their concern was how to achieve their objective without creating excessive and uncontrollable excitement, turmoil and rebellion by the assembled multitudes at the time of the Passover celebration. The means and manner of pulling this off will be set in place by Judas (vs. 14-16).

B. Precious Ointment for Jesus (26:6-13)

Prior to His arrival in Jerusalem, Jesus was at the home of Simon the leper in Bethany (two miles from Jerusalem). With keen insight and/or intuition, a woman anoints Jesus in preparation for His burial. The disciples, who typically misunderstood much that was taking place in the ministry of Jesus, complained about her actions. Jesus corrected their complaints and commended her for her actions. Earle provides a threefold perspective: “(1) There are times when the commonsense view of things fails, 6-9; (2) There are certain things which must be done when the opportunity arises, or they can never be done at all, 10-12; (3) The fragrance of a lovely deed lasts forever, 13.”⁸²

C. Price Agreement Concerning Betrayal of Jesus (26:14-16)

The motives behind this act by Judas have never, perhaps, been universally determined or understood. Nevertheless, he committed a deadly and gigantic sin, despite his privilege among the disciples. “Let none presume upon their spiritual privileges.”⁸³ This unexpected move by Judas made the actions of the chief priests easier and quicker. “This betrayal from a trusted apostle”⁸⁴ adds to the misery of the days ahead.

D. Passover & Lord’s Supper with Jesus (26:17-35)

The Passover was a Jewish spring festival in the spring to commemorate the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. This evening meal was held at a home or in a reserved room within the city for the occasion. “The room was prepared with floor cushions for reclining and small tables for serving. At the head of the room sat the one leading the ritual meal.”⁸⁵ This was the most appropriately scheduled time for instituting the deliverance of people from sin’s bondage through the sacrifice of Jesus. The announcement that one of the twelve would betray Him created shockwaves

⁸²232.

⁸³Caffin, 538.

⁸⁴Stagg, 231.

⁸⁵Wilson, 677.

and sadness on this occasion. Nevertheless, this was in fulfillment of prophecy, a prophecy symbolized in the bread and cup. It was also a promise. It was “not a farewell but a pledge that the *Father’s kingdom* would prevail and that Jesus’ people would be reunited in the messianic banquet under that sovereign rule. The Supper ends with a triumphant note. Jesus’ death is not defeat but victory.”⁸⁶

E. Praying of Jesus (26:36-46)

The location of the agonizing prayer time for Jesus on the night of His betrayal was the Garden of Gethsemane – “a grove of olive trees”⁸⁷ on the Mt. of Olives, east of the Kidron Valley. Peter, James, and John accompanied Him to the Garden. Jesus informed them of His sorrow to death with the obvious desire that they too share in the sorrow of the hour. It was an understandable desire for “human companionship in his hour of trial.”⁸⁸ For some reason, however, they fell asleep, an indication of some degree of insensitivity and/or selfishness on their part. At one of the most strategic moments in history, their failure to grasp its significance is startling, to say the least.

F. Partners against Jesus (26:47-75)

This rather lengthy section of scripture revolves around three primary features: **(a)** the betrayal and arrest of Jesus (26:47-56); Judas’ betrayal, Peter’s intention to harm the high priest’s slave, and Jesus’ compassion for that slave are hallmarks of wonder; **(b)** the hearing before Caiaphas (26:57-68); the trial of Jesus is recounted in all four gospel narratives with variations, “even though the basic procedure, motives, and charges are clear enough”⁸⁹; the mockery of Christ “is demonism become incarnate in a deed.”⁹⁰ **(c)** the denials by Peter (26:69-75); “The disciple who showed himself so craven was nevertheless the first witness of the Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:5; Lk. 24:34) and became the rock-apostle and a pillar of the church (Gal. 2:9).”⁹¹

G. Pain of and Prophecy Concerning the Betrayer of Jesus (27:1-10)

With the proceedings underway for Jesus to be turned over to Pilate the governor, Judas commits suicide. The death of Judas is recorded by Matthew alone in the Gospels. His regret for his actions is seen in his confession and returning of the money to the chief priests and the elders. His conscience was torn, twisted, convoluted, distorted, and stained with a

⁸⁶Stagg, 234.

⁸⁷Gasque, 457.

⁸⁸Johnson, 579.

⁸⁹Stagg, 238.

⁹⁰Buttrick, 588.

⁹¹Johnson, 589.

realization of his sin. “The remorse of **Judas** is understandable in any case, but especially if he did not intend that Jesus should be **condemned** (cf. on 26:14-16).”⁹² These religious leaders refused to place the money into the Temple treasury and instead used it to purchase a cemetery in fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah.⁹³

H. Pilate and Jesus (27:11-26)

The answer of Jesus from Pilate’s question about being the King of the Jews was a declaration of certainty. The “many things” which were brought against Him by the chief priests and elders resulted in no reply from Jesus. This amazed Pilate. Even his wife’s message to “having nothing to do with that righteous man” and her sufferings “over him today in a dream,” were ignored. So, in order to avoid the boiling riot which was underway, he released the prisoner, Barabbas, and declared Jesus innocent but, nevertheless, had Him scourged and delivered to be crucified. The people cheered with words which are still haunting: “His blood be on us and on our children.”

I. Praetorium and Mocking of Jesus (27:27-32)

The Praetorium was the official residence of the governor when he was in Jerusalem. The soldiers saw Jesus as a weakling and an impostor who regarded Himself as King of the Jews. The scarlet robe and reed were placed on Him in mockery. They ridiculed Him with spit and strikes. At the end of their mockery, they removed the robe and put His own clothes on Him. The cross was the next step.

J. Place of a Skull and Crucifixion of Jesus (27:33-56)

Due to Jesus’ fatigue, Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry His cross to Golgotha (“the place of a skull”). They offered him a drug to dull His senses but He refused it. He was determined “to meet death with open eyes”⁹⁴ and an alert mind. In fulfillment of prophecy, they gambled for His garments, another indicator of shame and mockery. Another mark of shame, mockery, and cruelty was the creation and placement of a sign: This is Jesus the King of the Jews! The two robbers on each side of Him were companions of the cruelty. Those who passed by, as well as the robbers on each side of Him, continued deriding Him with words of mockery over His claims to be the Son of God and to prove it by coming down from the cross. But Jesus bore it all and resisted the taunts and temptations. The fourth of the seven sayings from the cross occurred: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Some thought it was talking about Elijah. One of them gave Him a refreshing drink – not the stupefying drug which

⁹²Ibid, 591.

⁹³Jer. 18:2f; 32:6-15; cp. Zech. 11:12f.

⁹⁴Buttrick, 602.

He earlier resisted – and He received it. He then died. So dramatic and climatic was the event that cosmic occurrences took place in the Temple, the shaking of the earth, the splitting of rocks, and many Christians who had died were raised from the dead. Even the Gentile centurion was touched and exclaimed, “Truly this was the Son of God.” Matthew, Mark, and Luke all report that some women who had followed Jesus from Galilee also saw or witnessed the crucifixion “from afar.

K. Pallbearer and Burial of Jesus (27:57-66)

All four gospel narratives report that it was Joseph of Arimathea who buried Jesus. He was a rich man and was a disciple of Jesus. He sealed the entrance to the tomb with “a great stone.” The only other people who are mentioned as being there to watch the burial was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, likely the mother of James and Jose (Mk. 15:47). The tomb was guarded by soldier, all in an effort to prevent His disciples from stealing His body and claiming that He had been raised from the dead. So, the tomb was sealed with a stone and was under constant watch. “To break a seal fixed by government authority would be a high crime, bringing condign punishment. A cord was probably drawn across the stone which enclosed the door, and its ends were fastened by seals to the wall.”⁹⁵ Escape from within or entrance from without was impossible – ***or so they thought!***

VI **POWER of Jesus** (28:1-20)

A. Resurrection of Jesus (28:1-15)

The bodily resurrection of Jesus is the very foundation of the Christian faith. Its reality is verified by an empty tomb and many emissaries who saw Him alive. The same two Mary’s who saw His crucifixion were the first to see the empty tomb following the great earthquake, but it was an angel of the Lord who rolled back the stone. So earthshaking was the event that the guards trembled and were shocked into temporary unconsciousness. The same angel encouraged the women to see the empty tomb and tell His disciples that He was, indeed, risen from the dead. They responded immediately. Jesus Himself met them and worship followed. Be fearless, Jesus said, and told them that He would see the gang in Galilee. When the guards told the chief priests and the elders what had happened, they were bribed to say that the disciples had stolen His body and they would be protected from any trouble over the matter. “This story has been spread among the Jews to this day,” that is, at “the time of the writing of this Gospel.”⁹⁶

B. Commission from Jesus (28:16-20)

⁹⁵Broadus, 582.

⁹⁶Earle, 254.

The disciples, despite the many previous promises from Jesus about His resurrection, “had not expected to see Jesus again, and both the reports of His appearances and his actual presence among them were almost too good to be true.”⁹⁷ Nevertheless, it led to worship. But some still doubted, even though they saw Him alive. Were the doubts among the disciples or perhaps others who were among those – though not mentioned here – in the presence of the risen Christ? Whatever the exact case may be, Jesus proceeded to His commissioning of the disciples and provided the authority basis for doing so: *Himself*. The making of other disciples was the design and consisted of baptizing (as the public testimony of turning to Him) and teaching them to be obedient to His every command. The underlying assurance for carrying out this commission was not within themselves (their knowledge, skills, wishes, fears, etc.) but within Him. He through them would be at work, “ever present to bring to completion what he came to do.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷Stagg, 251.

⁹⁸Ibid, 253.

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